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Disciplinarity and Forgetfulness: On the Older Historiography of Global Connections

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Introduction: a History of Forgetting

It is probably fair to say that the (re-)turn towards the writing of global connected histories in recent years has not prompted exceptional curiosity for earlier cognate approaches. So far, historiographical ambitions in this field have rarely strayed, it would seem, beyond an interest in disciplinary canons, and within these, national traditions have often garnered the focus. Arguably, this is not a result of accidental neglect, but rather the consequence of various obstacles that beset a more fully fledged historiography of global connections.

First, in a field oriented towards chronologically and geographically far-flung materials, such historiographical ambitions can easily appear narrow and secondary—regardless of the fact that a sustained effort of such research would also generate improved prospects for a globally connected historiography of global connections. Second, in no small measure, recent global history has developed as a radical critique of western historical writing, and this has not been conducive to raising interest in the past of historical writing. Third, a significant portion of the older tradition in question unfolded outside the discipline of history, and an interdisciplinary understanding of historiography poses difficulties of its own. And fourth, the shortcomings of the older tradition had been met with an earlier critical response from what is known under the label of 'structuralism'. This interdisciplinary array of more or less interrelated research programs gained comparatively little hold over historical writing on account of its own critical stance towards history. So in a sense the current critique of historical writing is *competing* with an earlier critique: 'the enemy of my enemy is also my enemy.' The result is a situation of unacknowledged intractability. At the core of this intractability one reliably encounters disciplinarity—that is, a tangle of institutional structures, symbolic territorial claims, and imaginary contests. I argue that this strange beast is a force of historiographical forgetfulness. Its ruminations deserve greater attention.

A Sketch of a Historiography of Transfer and Hybridization

Already almost a decade ago, an imposing set of books appeared that revisited the history of scholarly orientalism in various guises and contexts. In 2008 Tuška Beneš traced major genealogical lines between contemporary social and literary theory, and

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especially the development of comparative linguistics in nineteenth-century Germany.[1] Since this development was driven by Indo-European studies, it assigned a place to Sanskrit orientalism at the heart of modern humanities discourse. Twentieth-century structuralist and post-structuralist theories built on nineteenth-century foundations.

In 2009 Suzanne Marchand published an even wider-ranging synthesis of German-language orientalism in the 'long' nineteenth century.[2] She highlighted the field's neglected interrelations with biblical studies and Classics, and also its inseparable entanglement with the history of German and European anti-Semitism. Marchand's overarching argument, however, made a contribution to the historiography of global connections; she claimed that this type of historical writing flourished in Germany, but 'failed' to develop into a 'mature' multicultural pluralism, due to ideological and political limitations—a precarious argument *ex negativo*.[3]

In 2010 Karla Mallette published a study of southern European orientalisms that brought together Italian and Spanish case studies.[4] She argued that, in both countries, nation-building discourses integrated positive interpretations of cultural hybridity in the medieval Mediterranean among Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities. These interpretations stood in marked contrast to the British-French model of orientalism described by Edward Said that was low on hybridity and high on alterity and superiority claims.

In 2011 Vera Tolz published her account of orientalist scholarship in late imperial and early Soviet Russia.[5] Tolz, too, uncovered an alternative model of orientalism: within the Russian inland empire, scholars contributed to an inclusive minority politics that sought to integrate ethnic groups into the greater political frame. Russian orientalists were critical of the superiority fantasies of their western colleagues, and, according to Tolz, this critique travelled via Soviet trained-scholars from post-colonial Lebanon into the educational environment of Edward Said himself, before he even moved to the United States.

In this collection of important contributions, certain shifts within the overall field became salient. There was a shared interest in identifying traditions of scholarship that did not fit into those familiar models outlined by Said and then contested in decades-long confrontations and polemics. These deviant traditions of scholarship tended to be based on notions of transfer and hybridization. They also tended to be

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1 TUŠKA BENEŠ, *In Babel's Shadow: Language, Philology and the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008).
2 SUZANNE MARCHAND, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
3 MARCHAND, *German Orientalism*, 495-98.
4 KARLA MALLETTE, *European Modernity and the Arab Mediterranean: Towards a New Philology and a Counter-Orientalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).
5 VERA TOLZ, *Russia's Own Orient: The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

understood as genealogically related to present-day humanities thinking and practice. Moreover, they tended to be placed in national containers that belonged to non-western Europe. As such, they played into a very familiar organization of centre and periphery in modern European history, a configuration epitomised by Said's exclusive coverage of British and French cases. In general, historical discourse remains ready to regard national frames as particular on the basis of their divergence from the central model alone, without much recourse to other peripheral cases. The mere juxtaposition of the four abovementioned books indicates that the authors overstate their cases when they assert that the tendency of orientalist scholarship to focus on transfers and hybridizations between Asia and Europe resulted from particularities of national scholarly discourses. Instead, it would seem to have been the case that Beneš, Marchand, Mallette, and Tolz, each within their chosen framework, happened upon a transnational European phenomenon.

Other work suggests as much, for instance a small study by the literary scholar Andrea Celli about three interrelated cases of Dante philology in the first half of the twentieth century.[6] Celli examines readings of Dante that highlighted, in the wake of the Spanish scholar Miguel Asín Palacios (who had pioneered this line of research in 1919), the supposed Arabic sources of the *Divine Comedy*. This approach may not have been as philologically sound as its followers then believed, but it disrupted established frameworks of European literary history. Focusing on the Italian specialist of Abyssinian philology Enrico Cerulli—also a deeply compromised Fascist-era colonial administrator—Celli shows how the perspective on a 'connected' Dante engendered also other research projects on early modern cultural transfers between Europe and Ethiopia. In other work, Cerulli for instance pursued a particular interest in transfers of the legends of the Virgin Mary from Europe to Ethiopia, thus reversing the usual direction of transfer investigations at the time. Celli's other cases indicate that such patterns of argument were not limited to southern European scholarship. The basic template recurred in the work of various German scholars: the Romanist Leo Spitzer, for instance, and the medieval historian and trained Ottomanist Ernst Kantorowicz. In the latter's case it is striking that the idea of an 'orientalized' Dante opened a perspective on kingship within a seamless Eurasian space of cultural transfers. Conceivably the potential of this perspective for the history of political thought is only beginning to be explored.[7]

Perhaps, however, this line of argument is tainted from the start, since it mistakes parallel development of structure for a genealogical relation. This basic, often undecidable alternative was already only too familiar at the end of the nineteenth century. Transfers of legends of the Virgin Mary can be philologically documented;

[6] ANDREA CELLI, *Dante e l'Oriente: Le fonti islamiche nella storiografia novecentesca* (Rome: Carocci, 2013).
[7] See, for example, A. AZFAR MOIN, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); SANJAY SUBRAHMANYAM, *Courtly Encounters: Translating Courtliness and Violence in Early Modern Eurasia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

transfer of political thought is much harder to evince. The beginnings of what later came to be labelled structuralism, both in France and in north eastern Europe, have much to do with Saussurean linguistics—its appreciation of the prevalence of synchronic over diachronic approaches, and its rebellion against the evolutionist views of the neo-grammarians dominant in the 1880s and 1890s. The same beginnings also have much to do with ethnography, psychology, folklore, and the study of popular literature.[8] The indefatigable collectors of fairy-tales and folksong were arguably the first to abandon genealogical arguments about the transfer of their material from there to here, and to embrace structural analysis and typological classification instead. Around 1910, the Finnish folklorist Antti Aarne, as a pioneer of this line of research, began assembling an index of fairy-tale plot types that, in later incarnations, remained a foundational tool in folklore studies.[9] Both the question of origins and the question of genealogies receded to the background. Arguably, Marchand's conundrum about the 'failure' of German scholarship to 'fully' develop its lines of research into genealogical transfer and hybridization perspectives is less puzzling if one takes into account that German scholarship, partly because of its insulation during and after the First World War, was particularly slow to take on the challenge of early structuralism. Although Aarne had published his work in German, its reception in Germany appears to have remained very hesitant. Instead, German scholars continued with an older research program although its international traction had suddenly collapsed. This research program then also dwindled and disappeared as orientalist studies in general declined in Weimar Germany and after.

Anglophone pioneers of what today is regarded as a more important prototype of global history pursued research programs that appear quite compatible with nineteenth-century concerns about cultural 'borrowings' (in Germany, the dominant concept for what today is called 'transfer' was *Entlehnung*, which interestingly conceded property rights to the source culture). Yet, these scholars—for instance, George Sarton and Joseph Needham and his collaborator Wang Ling in the history of science, or Marshall Hodgson in Islamic history—also already took the structuralist problem of parallels and genealogical agnosticism into account.[10] The notorious 'Needham

[8] The question of the early history of structuralism is arguably even more confusing than its later development, especially on account of the transnational character of this tendency in research. The rather assertive insistence in François Dosse's standard historical account, according to which structuralism was simply dominated by Francophone scholarship, is certainly wrong for the decades before the Second World War, which Dosse does not cover, see his *History of Structuralism* [1991], 2 vols (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

[9] ANTTI AARNE, *Verzeichnis der Märchentypen, mit Hülfe von Fachgenossen ausgearbeitet* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1910); STITH THOMPSON, *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography – Antti Aarne's Verzeichnis der Märchentypen, translated and enlarged by Stith Thompson* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1961).

[10] GEORGE SARTON, *Introduction to the History of Science*, 5 vols (Washington: Carnegie Institution, 1927-48); JOSEPH NEEDHAM, WANG LING, *Science and Civilisation in China, vol. 1: Introductory Orientations*

question,' namely 'Why Europe, why not China?,' is arguably an indirect expression of this structuralist problematic. Hodgson, by contrast, was more interested in challenging centre-periphery clichés within a civilizational account of the Islamic world, for which he accorded a greater prominence to Persianate culture than was common. Although the discarding of straightforward stipulations of centre-periphery relations was a concern common to at least some structuralist research programs—thinking of Lévi-Strauss, for instance—Hodgson's work was arguably more in line with earlier philological models. The most prominent of these may have been that of his teacher, the orientalist Louis Massignon. The latter was known as a scholar of peculiar forms of Islamic mysticism that had developed far beyond the theological mainstream. Edward Said decried this interest as one that distorted the picture of Islam; he thereby continued a long tradition of Islamic theological criticism of western scholarship.[11]

The example of Hodgson suggests that perhaps, in fields where both history and philology were concerned, the lingering force of the transfer and hybridity traditions warped the presence of structuralism. Michel Foucault argued that early-nineteenth-century comparative grammar—from which modern linguistics emerged—was underpinned by a tendency to assume that the individual units of comparison were unified by processes of self-enclosed, organicist historical evolution, and less by interrelations between them.[12] This was the 'episteme' of the 'human sciences' in general, informing also other, seemingly distant fields such as anatomy or economics. The force of this episteme was also still on display in the emerging social sciences in the late nineteenth century. The often structural, typological approach to civilizational history, as exemplified especially by Max Weber, may justly appear similar to what one finds in some branches of philology: the older comparative grammar rather than emerging structuralism. No doubt, by the mid-twentieth century, the social science tradition was highly important to authors engaged in world historical work. Nonetheless there were limits to this importance: another philological lineage, which did not follow the Foucaultian pattern but stressed connections between the putative units of comparison, continued to assert itself. The attention previously given to the hybridization of apparent civilizational units rendered these philological notions distinct and exercised a certain influence on historical writing as well. In the context of this field, embracing structure, then, did not imply positing the independence of developments, but simply abstention from judgment on exact lineages of transfer. Such an approach to writing history continued to demarcate a distinction towards the development of the social sciences. An interdisciplinary zone of ambiguity around global transfers and connections had emerged in the first half of the twentieth century.

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954); MARSHALL HODGSON, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, 3 vols (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

[11] The most extensive study of Arab responses to European orientalism I have seen is the unpublished dissertation of RONEN RAZ, *The Transparent Mirror: Arab Intellectuals and Orientalism, 1798-1950*, Princeton University, 1997.

[12] MICHEL FOUCAULT, *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).

Older Disciplinarities and Interdisciplinarities

This historiographical sketch is highly inadequate, but it suffices to indicate some major lines of contestation and confusion that traversed the complex interdisciplinary terrain of the history of global connections. The difficulties of calibrating relations, in the nineteenth century, between established, emerging, fragmented, or stagnant disciplines ought not to be underestimated. Divergence among the institutional statuses of, say, history, sociology, ethnology, folklore, and orientalism around 1900 was considerable. The incompatibility, even the antagonism, of disciplinary developments further helps explaining Marchand's conundrum. The 'multicultural' perspective on transfers and hybridization was lost in an indeterminate place between philology, parts of which gradually moved towards structure whilst other retained the transfer model; and history, to which the lure of structure, for years to come, appeared negligible. Within the discipline of history, topics of cultural transfer had successfully been relegated to the subfield of cultural history, which remained in the margins.

For an example of the fortunes of interdisciplinarity in the nineteenth century, one can turn to an 1887 study of the history of paper production conducted by two Austrian scholars, the orientalist Joseph von Karabacek and the botanist Julius Wiesner.[13] This rare collaboration between a humanist and a scientist yielded a set of rather solid judgments about the history of paper as a technological product. The basic invention had occurred in China; the technology of producing paper from rags had been invented in Samarkand after its inclusion into the Islamic world, and not only at the time when paper was adopted in late medieval Europe, as had previously been assumed. Paper made directly from cotton fibre, as postulated by some researchers as a step in the evolution of the technology, had never existed in the past. The authors reached their findings by microscopically examining samples—the process included burning scraps and similarly destructive interventions—and by carefully juxtaposing references to paper in old Arabic and Persian manuscripts. A history emerged; competition with disciplinary accounts such as Wilhelm Wattenbach's history of medieval writing materials, was palpable.[14] The authors were less explicit about another competing publication, the non-academic work of the French-Swiss paper producer and antiquarian scholar Charles-Moïse Briquet, even though or perhaps because, a mere year earlier, Briquet had published results that pointed to similar conclusions with regard to cotton paper. Admittedly, these results were far less amply documented with non-European sources.[15] Karabacek and Wiesner were able to work on archaeological

[13] JOSEPH KARABACEK, *Das arabische Papier: Eine historisch-antiquarische Untersuchung* (Vienna: K. k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1887); JULIUS WIESNER, *Die mikroskopische Untersuchung des Papiers mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der ältesten orientalischen und europäischen Papiere* (Vienna: K. k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1887).

[14] WILHELM WATTENBACH, *Das Schriftwesen im Mittelalter* [1871] (2nd edition, Leipzig: Hirzel, 1875).

[15] CHARLES-MOÏSE BRIQUET, *Recherches sur les premiers papiers employés en Occident et en Orient du Xe au XIVe siècle*, (Paris: Offprint of *Mémoires de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France*, 46 [1886]).

discoveries of paper in the collection from the Fayum Oasis that had been acquired for Vienna, materials that had not been available to Briquet.

In the study of paper, an interdisciplinary Asian-European approach to history appeared attainable.[16] Certainly readers would have been obliged to tolerate some level of untenable speculation. Karabacek was a frequently debunked author, as indeed were many orientalists (but his account of paper appears to have remained intact). Nonetheless, such debunking could have been, and often was, regarded as corrective work that did not undermine the notion that history should address intercontinental connections, and acknowledge the 'oriental' presence in the 'Occident.' And yet, in the long run, this once well-established line of research produced little intellectual offspring.

This lack of fertility followed from a number of impedimental circumstances, among which especially the different levels of the establishment of disciplinary ventures. The one-sidedness of transfer histories, always into Europe, was one of the markers of this situation. For, the widespread failure to consider European impact on non-European cultures and societies was partly induced by political context, as a consequence of the marginalized institutional and symbolic position of orientalist philologies. Scholars interested in the reality of contemporary European imperialisms usually serviced imperial apparatuses. Even when they sought to formulate critical perspectives, selective blindness for the contemporary realities of European impact on colonized societies was virtually *de rigueur* for orientalists. For instance, this was the case with Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje during his sojourn in Indonesia and his subsequent tenure in Leiden, when he conspicuously sought to formulate the tenets of an 'ethical' reform of colonial policy, but without offering much of an honest assessment of changes imposed by, for instance, his own work as a colonial administrator.[17]

The political reality of empire pervaded academic institutions. Snouck might never have developed an interest in things Indonesian if a position had been attainable in his chosen field, the study of Arabic and Islam. Yet by the 1880s, when he had to take decisions about his career, all the professorships in Arabic and Islam were occupied for decades to come. The exigencies and disengagements of empire also shaped the early career of Johan Huizinga, certainly one of the most famous historians of the twentieth century, who was initially trained as a scholar of Sanskrit. For Dutch Sanskritists career options were even more limited than for Arabists: the Dutch empire had even less use for Indology. Huizinga's interests were in literary history, and corresponded with themes then popular in the transfer-oriented wing of orientalist

[16] It even prompted Wattenbach, one of the then-famous lights involved in the critical publication of primary sources through the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, to revisit his account: WILHELM WATTENBACH, *Das Schriftwesen im Mittelalter* (3rd edition, Leipzig: Hirzel, 1896), 140.
[17] See still WILLEM OTTERSPEER, "The Ethical Imperative," in *Leiden Oriental Connections 1850-1940*, ed. by WILLEM OTTERSPEER (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 204-29.

philology. Yet in response to the pressure of imperial and/or national utility he opted for a change of disciplines. In order to qualify as a schoolteacher he became a medievalist, for whom an earlier education in ancient Indian literature mattered only in subterranean ways.[18] Historians, on account of their role as preceptors of the meaning of nationhood, had carved out a far more secure institutional position within European university systems. Huizinga regarded his surprising appointment as a professor of history at Groningen University as a fluke.[19] In many regards this assessment may have been correct, because a scholar with his background and cultural historical interests was indeed something of a bird of paradise among the sparrows.

So *fin de siècle* interdisciplinarity floundered institutionally when it involved disciplines at very divergent levels of institutionalization. Early structuralism, in its confusing alignment of seemingly far-apart disciplinary endeavours, can be said to have represented a novel alliance of the weak and disadvantaged. It almost entirely omitted those disciplines within the broader array of philologies that were well established due to their significance for projects of nation-building or empire, such as classicism, the more successful variants of modern vernacular philology, and those variants of orientalism that were useful in the respective imperial contexts. Similarly, structuralism bypassed history. Indeed, some of the most famous representatives of this patchwork of approaches (whether or not they accepted the label 'structuralist')—most notably, perhaps, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Louis Althusser, and Michel Foucault—published trenchant critiques of historical thought as such. Under the label of structuralism, linguistics, sociology, marginal philologies, psychoanalysis, and cultural anthropology came together and flourished. Yet the alliance was uneven since the historicizing questions of transfer and hybridization continued to matter, but only to some of these fields. Lévi-Strauss was hard at work on a disciplinary edifice that avoided the conceptual infrastructure of modern European historical writing, especially with regard to historical time as a symbolic order that could not properly function without an over-appreciation of change and progress. Ironically, he also produced some original thought on cultural transfer that current global history might perhaps still find useful.[20] Yet a threshold of reception continues to remain in place that still suffices for keeping the disciplines apart.

Lévi-Straus's intuition that renouncing the genealogical perspective of hybridization and transfer as an approach to writing history also entailed further-

[18] His dissertation on the figure of the *vidushaka* in Sanskrit puppet drama, a distant forebear of the harlequin in European theater traditions, was a significant contribution to a tiny field, exemplified by works of German orientalists such as Richard Pischel, Georg Jacob, and Paul E. Kahle; see JOHAN HUIZINGA, *De Vidushaka in het indisch toneel* [1897], in *Verzamelde Werken* 1 (Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink, 1948).

[19] See the account in JOHAN HUIZINGA, "Mijn weg tot de historie," in *Verzamelde Werken* 1 (Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink, 1948), 11-42.

[20] Namely on the interdependent differentiation of tribal cultures, see, for example, CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS, *La voie des masques* [1975] (2nd edition, Paris: Plon, 1979).

reaching shifts in the conceptual framework of historical temporality, was hard to contest—not least because this nexus had been around in humanities discourse for more than a century. Marchand has written about one of the clearest and earliest instantiations of this problematic: the so-called 'Creuzerstreit' (Creuzer controversy) among German classicists of the Romantic era.[21] Friedrich Creuzer had launched a plethora of mostly speculative arguments about 'oriental' origins of the decisive features of Greek antiquity. The ensuing polemic was foundational for the *esprit de corps* of Classics as a discipline in Germany. Throughout the nineteenth century, scholars who echoed Creuzer's line of argument were excluded from the disciplinary community. Friedrich Nietzsche's ostracism from Classics was codetermined by this deep-seated resentment, as his study of tragedy had posited 'oriental' origins. The modern German ideological template that Marchand labels 'philhellenism' presupposed the sharp distinction between Classics and orientalism. This distinction was an echo of the even older commonplace of the opposition between Athens and Jersualem, the confrontation of normatively charged antiquities, classical *versus* biblical, that in some way or other accompanied all formation of humanities disciplines. In the nineteenth century, this confrontation was translated into one of classical and oriental antiquities on large scale. It became a model for setting in motion a competition of validity among ancient 'civilizations' (or 'high cultures') that was one of the most significant meaning-giving features of the study of antiquity well into the twentieth century. Vestiges of this model mark many disciplines even today.

Nonetheless, by the last third of the nineteenth century, the overall tendency of those concerned with historical thought to study genealogical connections began to vindicate a notion of an all-connected Mediterranean ancient world. Or perhaps this notion took hold even earlier, if one counts Johann Gustav Droysen's Greek-Persian synthesis argument for 'Hellenism' as a precursor of, say, Eduard Meyer's integrated view of ancient history. As is well known, unlike Droysen who had been a trained Grecist, Meyer made great efforts to acquire knowledge in orientalist fields such as Egyptian and Semitics. The study of antiquity was a field shared between philology and history, and thus interdisciplinary. On account of this interdisciplinarity, the field was also comfortably contradictory. Comfortably, since Classics embraced notions of hybridization as well as the idea of civilizational self-sufficiency. The contradiction fully emerged only on a remote plane of theoretical convictions that scholars mostly avoided making explicit. The notion of an implicit competition among civilizations required dispensing with questions of chronology. For if, say, the Ancient Egyptians and the Ancient Greeks were to be measured by the same measure, it could not matter that the former had existed at an earlier time and for a longer period. Further, the question of 'influences' or 'borrowings' could really only be avoided if the norm, in historical writing, to insert everything into a unified frame of historical time was suspended. Hybridization, by contrast, required a unified historical temporality. No wonder that a

[21] MARCHAND, *German Orientalism*, especially 66-72.

matter so abstract did not appear at the forefront of debate, even though it was part of the tacit knowledge that steered scholars' work. Orientalists were hard pressed to stake out a territory of their own in the overall field of theory and methodology; mostly, at least in Germany, they ceded authority over the theorization of their discipline(s) to the classicists. This further cemented the orientalists' marginality. So it is unsurprising that many orientalists hitched their fortunes to the promises of 'structure' when the latter came forward: this offered a way out from the comfort zone of contradiction all nineteenth-century philologies had managed to inhabit, but unequally, on different levels of institutional power and recognition.

Questions of disciplinary territory and priority can only exist in a symbolic domain where knowledge and institutions are combined to become chimeric beasts that roam the imaginary of scholarship. It is hardly unexpected that this domain was constantly evoked in the explanatory approaches, in the kinds of claims that appeared plausible and legitimate, and in the knowledge that was produced in humanities disciplines. Less obviously, though, symbolic disciplinarity was also a necessary condition for the production of scholarly knowledge in the humanities. Without a symbolic imagination of the intimated kind, scholarship in the humanities would have been bereft of a critical mass of those discursive and practical resources that provided structure and guidance.

In addition to this merely counterfactual consideration, one might argue that the symbolic character of disciplinarity served as a resource for establishing what Gaston Bachelard called 'epistemological rupture.'[22] Bachelard was referring to the rupture with quotidian knowledge that, in his view, was consistently driving the production of scientific knowledge—which justifies itself by being better (more reliable, more predictive, more precise, further-reaching, and so on) than ordinary manifestations of knowledge. More precisely, mere difference already suffices: distinct vocabularies, shifts into the formal language of mathematics, or the sheer territoriality of disciplinarity constitute the particularity of scientific knowledge. In the humanities, as elsewhere, the territorial structure of knowledge was, and remains, opaque to those who have not undergone elaborate training in the respective disciplines. Bachelard was also the philosopher of the unconscious of scientific knowledge. The contemporary forgetting of the older tradition of transfer and hybridization perspectives in global history can be explained through the processes of filtering and rupture that shaped the twentieth-century history of the humanities.

[22] GASTON BACHELARD, *La formation de l'esprit scientifique: Contribution à une psychanalyse de la connaissance objective* (Paris: Vrin, 1938).

Disciplinarity and the History of the Humanities

The history of the humanities appears to have become a thriving domain in recent years.[23] Its vitality is surprising because of the widespread sense of crisis in the overall field, and the common notion that more reflexivity merely amounts to carving new ornaments onto the ivory tower. Yet the sense that the history of science—as a successful discipline in its own right—will never accommodate the history of the humanities more than peripherally appears to outweigh the fear of self-referentiality.[24] Perhaps the process of the formation of an autonomous field is irreversible, even if present-day efforts to address the history of the humanities hardly appear to be driven by a unified research program. Under the pressure of developments in philosophy and history of science, theoretically it seems inevitable that older conceptual tools are dropped. Such tools are exemplified by the supposed distinction between *Verstehen* (understanding) and *Erklären* (explanation) argued by Wilhelm Dilthey and the neo-Kantians, or C. P. Snow's 'two cultures.' If these have proved under-complex in the analysis of knowledge in the natural sciences, it seems unlikely that they fare better with reference to the humanities.

As a result, the supposed particularity of knowledge production in the humanities—traditionally important as a rationale for not including the humanities in the general history of science—becomes only more elusive. The sense of context, supposedly a strength of humanities thought, often remains somewhat feeble, especially where notions of a universal scientific method come to inform debate. James Turner's synthesis of the history of philology, for instance, seems to retain faith in the stability of philological method as a universal tool for the reading of texts, regardless of whichever contextual conditions have shaped reading practices in the past.[25] Pressure to be apologetic about the humanities as a whole appears to outweigh the pressure to be critical. Meanwhile, some scholars, often for good pragmatic reasons, achieve global scope mainly by producing additive accounts that often remain rather short on questions of transfer and hybridity.[26] The threshold of modernity around 1800

[23] See, for instance, RENS BOD, *A New History of the Humanities: The Search for Principles and Patterns from Antiquity to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), and the new journal *History of Humanities* (University of Chicago Press, 2016ff.).

[24] Even current stock-taking endeavors, such as the admirable three volumes DOMINIQUE PESTRE et al., eds, *Histoire des sciences et des savoirs* (Paris: Seuil, 2015) indicate that history of science will offer no more than a peripheral role to the history of the humanities.

[25] JAMES TURNER, *Philology: The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

[26] For philology, see, for instance, SHELDON POLLOCK, BENJAMIN A. ELMAN, KU-MING KEVIN CHANG, eds, *World Philology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015). For historiography, see DANIEL WOOLF, *A Global History of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), and GEORG G. IGGERS, Q. EDWARD WANG, SUPRIYA MUKHERJEE, *A Global History of Modern Historiography* (2nd edition, London: Routledge, 2017).

remains accepted even by those who emphasize the importance of achievements in older times.[27]

While potentially a tedious and even annoying topic, the history of interdisciplinary collaboration and contention among scholars from different fields in the humanities conceivably provides a solution to some of these problems. In the humanities, disciplinary territoriality and interdisciplinarity arguably bear greater weight in achieving epistemological rupture than in the sciences. Whereas in the sciences, interdisciplinary connections often seem to emerge mainly for pragmatic reasons, in the humanities, the determination of what is 'useful' even in terms of mere knowledge is often more difficult to achieve, just as, for lack of mathematization, 'results' are harder to define. Alliances tend to be more fleeting in the humanities, while contrasts between successful and questionable formations of disciplines appear starker. This diagnosis, if plausible, forces analysis in the history of the humanities into a small-scale labour of contextualization that reaches beyond accounting for research programs and methodologies. Emphasis on the symbolic features of disciplines and their conflicts over territories and priorities opens novel perspectives. A deeper investigation of the earlier historiography of global connectedness can, and ought to, contribute to establishing such openings.

[27] As is evident in ANTHONY GRAFTON, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (London: Faber & Faber, 1997); something similar holds for the early modernities approach pioneered, for instance, in VELCHERU NARAYANA RAO, DAVID SHULMAN, SANJAY SUBRAHMANYAM, *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India 1600-1800* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001).